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ABSTRACT

The effects of a migratory existence on a child are sometimes deep and difficult to overcome. To overcome these problems in our district, we have used orientation by the principal, guidance persons, assistant principal, and/or teacher in an attempt to make the pupil feel wanted and worthwhile. We have also used meetings between the child's parents and the principal to enable parents to counsel their child and help him to adjust. A standard system and timetable of record forwarding could also help overcome many adjustment problems. In our district, migrant students are no longer absorbed into the regular school system. Instead they attend a new migrant student facility, which provides teachers, aides, dental care, eye examinations, a social worker, transportation, and other necessities. An answer to the records transfer problem was provided by the Migrant Student Record Transfer System in Little Rock. During the summer, our migrant facility serves "home-based" migrant children, who are out of the area during most of the regular school terms but return during the summer. (Author/JG)

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HOW TO COPE WITH THE TRANSIENT CHILD

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HOW TO COPE WITH THE TRANSIENT CHILD

The transient child is characterized by many forms of behavior, seemingly dependent on the degree of mobility, membership in a minority group, stability of the home environment, and a multitude of other factors which affect all youngsters.

For the sake of this discussion, let us break transients into two distinct groups:

1) The true MIGRANT, a child who travels with his parents, relatives, or friends from one location to another in a fairly well-defined pattern so as to follow a specific job-group, produce-harvest, or other means of a livelihood.

2) The TRANSIENT child, one who travels with his parents or relatives from one geographic location to another, usually less frequently than the migrant, but on the average of once or twice each school year.

I am going to discuss the TRANSIENT child first, and conclude with the MIGRANT child, as I have more definite information due to specific experiences in dealing with the MIGRANT child.

Admittedly, a certain amount of transitory movement is expected and even valuable in a state where this movement usually shows an attempt to raise income, educational attainment, or other positive factors. However, the effects on the child of a transitory existence are sometimes deep and difficult to overcome.

Some of the difficulties encountered for a transient child to overcome, which in turn offers a challenge to the school((or school board) are as follows:

1) suffers from a severe disbelief in himself
2) achieves less in school
3) is less motivated
4) displays less ambition
5) drops out of school earlier
6) reads less and with less accuracy than his peers.

Most certainly there are transient students who are exceptions to these characteristics. But also adding to, and sometimes because of these characteristics, the transient child must also face:

1) problems of becoming totally integrated into a classroom because of lagging records
2) peer rejection until he has proven himself worthy of acceptance by some system he must first discover
3) adjustment to a new teacher
4) adjustment to a new principal
5) adjustment to a different curriculum, possibly involving a different approach to basal reading instruction.

In an effort to overcome these problems, we have used orientation by the principal, guidance persons, assistant principal, and/or teacher. This orientation goes a long way toward making the pupil feel wanted, worthwhile, and positive toward himself. We have also used meetings with the parents and the principal, during which time the parents are taken on a tour of the school facilities and are advised of the policies of the school, as well as the curriculum, and the extra-curricular activities available. This meeting with the parents has proven most successful as it enables the parents to counsel with the child, and help him to make necessary adjustments. There is one problem area, which if resolved, could help overcome several of the characteristics mentioned--this is a standard system and time-table of record-forwarding. Under the system (or lack of a system) as currently used, a student is either

comfortably adjusted to his new surroundings, or has failed miserably to adjust by the time his records are available.

Though complete data is lacking on the number of multiple moves within a school year, we do know that nationally the rate of moves from one school system to another, including moves from one state to another, ranges from four to six percent (4-6%) annually. During the 1973-74 school year in the state of Louisiana, over nineteen thousand (19,000) students moved from one parish to another within the state, while another twenty-one thousand (21,000) moved into or out of the state. Allowing for duplications, among the categories, this would still fall within the four to six percent (4-6%) range, since Louisiana records an Average Daily Membership of some eight hundred thirty-one thousand (831,000) students.

In our school district of Tangipahoa Parish, we have encountered many problems pertaining to the MIGRANT student, but feel that we have more ably coped with, and resolved some of these problems.

As a strawberry producing area, many migrants enter our area during the strawberry harvest season, which is the spring of the year. Until approximately thirteen years ago, these migrant students either were absorbed into the regular school system, which was a great disadvantage to them, or did not attend school at all. A group of women, recognizing the needs of these students, voluntarily organized to provide an educational opprotunity for these migrants. They approached the parish school board to provide a facility for this program. For two years, this was the extent of the school board's participation.

Then, federal funds became available to assist with this program, which enabled the board to erect a new, and proper type facility, teachers, aides, dental care, eye examinations, social worker, transportation, and other necessities for a sound program.

However, another problem in the form of being able to place students at their proper level was encountered. Having these students for only approximately two or three months per year, there was not sufficient time to determine their level, and then impart much knowledge to them.

An answer to this problem was provided by the Migrant Student Record Transfer System in Little Rock, with easy access to these records via a TWX system.

Our migrant school was expanded a few years ago to take care of "Home-based" migrants. These are students that move with their families as various crops are harvested in different parts of the country, which takes them away during most of the regular school terms, but brings them home during the summer. By providing a summer program at our migrant school facility, we are able to help these students.

Time does not permit me to go into more detail as to the many problems encountered over the years and how they were resolved. However we are now facing another big problem--and it is one we have been confronted with before. We have just recently been advised by H. E. W. that our migrant program will be funded this year, but most probably not next year. This means we must seek state funds, or endeavor to conduct the program with local funds. To do this with local funds would definitely be very difficult, as our local funds are very limited.